

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 AID-05 /074 W
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R 160630Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1643

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT MORESBY 0715

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, BP

SUBJ: NEW CHIEF MINISTER OF SOLOMON ISLANDS

1. PRESS AND RADIO HAVE REPORTED THAT AFTER SIX SECRET BALLOTS PETER KENILOREA (MEMBER FROM EAST ARE ARE, MALAITA) WAS CHOSEN CHIEF MINISTER OF SOLOMON ISLANDS IN SURPRISE DEFEAT OF SOLOMON MAMALONI.

2. KENILOREA, WHO WAS EDUCATED IN THE SOLOMONS, IN NEW ZEALAND AND AT USP, WAS SECRETARY IN CHIEF MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT AND CLOSE POLITICAL ADVISOR OF MAMALONI UNTIL THEY HAD A DISAGREEMENT, ACCORDING TO AUSTRALIANS. HE THEN LEFT CHIEF MINISTER'S OFFICE AND BECAME DISTRICT COMMISSIONER IN MALAITA. HE STOOD FOR THE ARE ARE CONSTITUENCY IN 1973 BUT WAS DEFEATED. HE WAS UNOPPOSED IN THE 1976 ELECTION.

3. A SOLOMON ISLANDER ON THE STAFF OF UPNG TOLD US THAT KENILOREA AND MAMALONI ARE STILL ON GOOD TERMS AND THAT MAMALONI MAY WELL BE IN NEW CABINET.

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SOURCE SAID LAND PROBLEMS ON MALAITA HAVE BECOME

SERIOUS, AND MAMALONI MAY BE GLAD TO HAVE MALAITAN (SUCH AS KENILOREA) TAKE THE HELM WHILE THESE PROBLEMS ARE BEING WORKED OUT.

4. COMMENT: IT WAS GENERALLY EXPECTED THAT MAMALONI WOULD BE REELECTED. VERY LITTLE INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE HERE ABOUT KENILOREA, BUT HE SEEMS TO BE WOEFULLY INEXPERIENCED FOR THE JOB. AS FAR AS WE ARE AWARE, HIS ONLY POLITICAL EXPERIENCE WAS BRIEF PERIOD IN MAMALONI'S OFFICE. AN INTERESTING POINT IS EMERGENCE OF A MALAITA BLOC IN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY HEADED BY A MALAITAN CHIEF MINISTER. BOTH HONIARA MEMBERS ARE IN FACT MALAITANS, AND AS MALAITA IS THE MOST POPULOUS ISLAND, THIS WILL BE AN IMPORTANT GROUP. SIGNIFICANCE LIES IN FACT THAT MALAITANS ARE GENERALLY DISLIKED THROUGHOUT SOLOMONS, AND EMERGENCE OF MALAITA BLOC WILL PROBABLY BE A DIVISIVE FACTOR IN AN ALREADY UNSTABLE SITUATION. OLMSTED

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTION RESULTS, POLITICAL LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976PORTM00715
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760274-0781
From: PORT MORESBY
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760750/aaaabrup.tel
Line Count: 80
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <17 MAY 2004 by buchant0>; APPROVED <09 SEP 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NEW CHIEF MINISTER OF SOLOMON ISLANDS
TAGS: PGOV, BP, (KENILOREA, PETER)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006